

**AVIATION AND TRANSIT BOARD MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, June 1, 2021**

The Aviation and Transit Board met in the Administration Conference Room at the Billings Logan International Airport on Tuesday, June 1, 2021. Those in attendance included:

**Aviation and Transit Board Members**

Dan Farmer, Chair  
Ron Spence, Vice Chair  
Ken Behling  
Mark Astle  
Chuck Tooley  
David Hummel, Jr.  
Steve Tostenrud

**City Staff and Guests**

Kevin Ploehn, Director of Aviation & Transit  
Shane Ketterling, Assistant Director of Aviation & Transit  
Rusty Logan, Transit Manager

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

A public comment period was offered. No public comments were received.

**FY 22 BUDGET REVIEW**

Mr. Ploehn informed the Board that staff had recently spent time with City Council going over the FY 22 budget. He then showed a PowerPoint presentation to the Board explaining the accomplishments and challenges at the Airport and MET, along with going over revenues, expenses, and projects.

**AIRPORT AND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATIVE/OPERATIONS REPORTS**

- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Board that the enplanement numbers are recovering from last year and actually are coming in better than initially anticipated.
- ▶ Mr. Logan stated that MET's numbers with paratransit were performing very well and fixed route recovering as well.
- ▶ Mr. Ploehn informed the Board that staff had worked with Visit Billings and St. Johns United on signboards that will be displayed in baggage claim on the end of the bag belts providing information on where passengers can go for COVID testing.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling stated that Summer maintenance projects were in full swing. He reminded the Board that we did not have seasonal employees last year due to COVID and that we are trying to hire up to six for this Summer, but as everyone is experiencing, we are having trouble hiring employees. Therefore, we are trying to get a lot of things done with fewer people; weed spraying, mowing, painting, asphalt repair, all while still allowing employees to take time off.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling advised the Board that the Airport Operations Division conducted fire fighting training last week and that the live burn went well. All of our employees are certified for another year.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling stated that he just received an e-mail from our FAA Certification Inspector that he will be here next week. All of our supervisors do a good job of keeping everything up-to-date on training records and making sure the airfield is in compliance, so we are ready for an inspection at any time.

- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed the Board that Rusty Logan is our representative sitting in on the Teamster negotiations. The current contract expires June 30 and they have been meeting for a month now. Staff has cleaned up a lot of contract language on things that did not read right. Hopefully negotiations will be accomplished by July 1.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling stated that another certification item that needs to be completed annually, per FAA requirements, is a table top discussion on the Airport Emergency Plan. This discussion would allow airlines, tenants, mutual aid responders, AMR, and Billings Fire Department to talk through our FAA requirements and go over a specific scenario with everyone. Airport Operations Supervisor, Paul Totton, coordinates this annual event and will attend the August meeting and go over the presentation.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling informed the Board that we had two C-130s come in last week with 35 Army rangers from a parachute division out of Atlanta to do a training mission. They flew over and parachuted into the area of the Big Horn Mountains.
- ▶ Mr. Ketterling provided an overview of the construction projects scheduled:
  - The overlay of Rimtop Drive was scheduled to start last week; however, there is a delay on the project due to FirstMark, who was the low bidder on this project, going out of business.
  - Knife River will start Schedule III of the ramp replacement next week.
- ▶ Mr. Logan advised the Board on the following:
  - Currently MET has five vacant operator positions with two interviews scheduled for tomorrow with individuals with transit experience. He noted that they are competing with increasing wages for truck drivers.
  - Weekend dispatching starts next week; phone lines will be open for customers to contact the MET.
  - Upgrades to the phone system, call recording, drop in from supervisors, etc. to support staff reviews for Public Transit Agency Safety Plans (similar to driver reviews).
  - Additional 5303 money for Transit planning is available and estimated at \$60,000–\$75,000.
  - The new buses are still being built and the information for the voice annunciation system was sent over to the vendor for programming. Staff is looking at a plan on how to best utilize the infotainment systems, as well as increasing MET marketing overall.
- ▶ Mr. Logan discussed the new signage at the transfer centers and showed the Board some pictures along with the new landscaping. Also stating that we are under contract for the new fueling system.
- ▶ Mr. Logan stated that paratransit continues to grow, regularly seeing around 150 rides per day. Last month averaged 120 per day. MET is adding two additional paratransit vans into service each day starting next week. Overall, paratransit rides are now only down 38%; but compared to May with initial COVID lockdowns, ridership is up 142%. The fixed route ridership is averaging around 1,100 rides per day; this will go down in June with school no longer in session. Mr. Logan mentioned that the Alliance Senior rides program continues to grow and is anticipating contracting for a minimum of 400 rides next year with room for growth. Additionally, the State of Montana contract rides will be coming back as well.
- ▶ Mr. Logan explained that MET is part of the Montana Transit Association and that he is on the Board. The Association hosts the Statewide Bus Roadeo and Mr. Logan suggested that they create a Carey Pope award for Transit Comradery and Sportsmanship for operators in honor of Carey Pope, a driver for MET Transit that died suddenly of a heart attack. Mr. Pope was very passionate about the competition and helped out a lot with customer service. Peers would nominate and the award would be given at the Statewide Bus Roadeo.

## **JULY 2021 MEETING DISCUSSION**

Mr. Ploehn noted that traditionally the July meeting was canceled due to the proximity of the Fourth of July Holiday and he wondered if the Board would like to skip the meeting next month. The Board agreed to not meet in July.

**ITEMS FROM THE BOARD**

- ▶ Board Member Spence asked about the State Aviation Conference and whether it was still scheduled for next February in Billings. Mr. Ploehn said that he would look into it.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

KP:mdb

cc: Aviation and Transit Board  
Chrono  
City Administrator  
Mayor  
City Clerk